Short Sentences of Gertrude Stein (1932; First Vintage Books Edition, October 1975)

Think about a single work of art. What is the relationship of the work in question to the complete works of the artist in question? What is the relationship of the work in question to the other works of art which were created during the same historical period? Is the work of art about which you are thinking more highly regarded by contemporary critics than it was by those critics writing at the time when the work was created? Is the work of art about which you are thinking less highly regarded by contemporary critics than it was by those critics writing at the time when the work was created? Is the work of art about which you are thinking the most important work created by the artist in question? Was the work of art about which you are thinking created by an artist who began at an early age to create aesthetic forms and who continued to do likewise more or less regularly until old age? Was the work of art in question created by an artist who began in midlife to create works of art? Was the work of art in question created by an artist who began in old age to create aesthetic forms? Is the work of art about which you are thinking the creation of an artist whose creative life is divided into two or more distinct periods of activity separated by a period or periods of relative inactivity? Is the work of art in question in that medium in which the artist in question most often worked? Was the work of art about which you are thinking created in an historical period during which the will-to-art was the will-to-empathy? Was the work of art about which you are thinking created in an historical period during which the will-to-art was the will-to abstraction? Is the work of art in question in that medium in which the artist in question most often works? Are you able to explain why you are thinking about the work of art about which you are thinking? In choosing a work of art about which to think did you first think about an artist and then about one of his works or did you think about the work of art first? Have you ever contemplated the work of art in question as an autonomous aesthetic phenomenon? Have you ever attempted to contemplate the work of art in question as an autonomous aesthetic phenomenon? Is this the first time you have ever thought about the work about which you are thinking? When was the last time you thought about the work of art in question? 18 questions written down while thinking about Siegfried of Richard Wagner.

(L'Aire: 8-16-76)